

## **EXHIBIT 109**

### **Declaration of Neils Ribeiro-Yemofio**

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA  
CASE NO. 1:14-CV-954**

**STUDENTS FOR FAIR  
ADMISSIONS, INC.,**

**Plaintiff,**

**v.**

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH  
CAROLINA et al.,**

**Defendants.**

**DECLARATION OF NEILS RIBEIRO-YEMOFIO**

## DECLARATION OF NEILS RIBEIRO-YEMOFIO

I, Neils Ribeiro-Yemofio, hereby make this declaration from my personal knowledge and, if called to testify to these facts, could and would do so competently:

### **Background**

1. I am the Managing Director of Recruitment and Admissions of the Mid-Atlantic Region for City Year, a nonprofit organization that focuses on helping historically underrepresented students succeed in school.

2. I graduated from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (“UNC-Chapel Hill” or the “University”) in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts in Management and Society. I also received a Master of Science in Nonprofit Management with a concentration in Organizational Leadership from Northeastern University.

3. I was born and raised in Alexandria, Virginia, and my family is originally from Ghana. I am a first-generation United States citizen and a Black male. Early on, I did not have the best schooling experience. My parents have not been together since I was eight or nine, and my mom moved us constantly in search of better educational opportunities. I must have moved to four or five different schools.

4. I do not remember a time when I did not want to go to UNC-Chapel Hill. When I was five years old, I wanted to go to UNC-Chapel Hill because I liked Michael Jordan and the University’s colors. For a while after that, I wanted to attend a Historically Black College or University (“HBCU”) like Howard University or Morehouse College. When I got to high school, I knew I wanted to live in North Carolina, where my dad lived. I realized UNC-Chapel Hill was the best school in North

Carolina, so I had tunnel vision about going to UNC-Chapel Hill from then on. It all came full circle for me—the school I wanted to go to when I was young then became, in my mind, the best school in the State, if not the world.

### **Experience at UNC-Chapel Hill**

5. When I was growing up, the makeup of Northern Virginia was a hub of diversity with lots of first and second-generation United States citizens. It was shocking to come from Northern Virginia to a place where the majority is White.

6. During my first semester at UNC-Chapel Hill, I did not feel like it was the right place for me, and it did not feel like home. I did not need to study in high school, so I had to learn how to study quickly. My Academic Advisor supported me and told me that my struggles were normal, and I know that my Academic Advisor also helped three or four of my friends. I wized up and started attending office hours and talking to my professors. I changed my major five times before finally settling on Management and Society. These experiences with my Academic Advisor and my professors changed my attitude about not feeling at home at UNC-Chapel Hill.

7. When I came to UNC-Chapel Hill, I was not polished. I did not know how to speak eloquently, and I had a southeast Washington, D.C. accent. My professors and Academic Advisor looked at me and saw a Tar Heel. They helped me reach my potential, and now I am a national leader in a national organization.

8. One of the amazing things about UNC-Chapel Hill is FallFest, where there are organizations for everyone to join, whether you like math or whether your family is from Africa. I joined five different organizations at FallFest, and after a few months, I

had a network at UNC-Chapel Hill. I joined the Organization for African Students' Interests and Solidarity ("OASIS"), the Black Student Movement ("BSM"), a club football team, and served as a referee for campus recreation. I also joined a fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, and served in Greek Affairs and Greek Government on a Hiring Affairs Committee for the Greek Director. I worked in Diversity and Multicultural Affairs ("DMA") and with Project Uplift, a program that brings rising seniors from historically underserved populations to campus to experience UNC-Chapel Hill life. I also volunteered in the Admissions Office, calling prospective students in the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area to tell them about my experiences at UNC-Chapel Hill.

9. UNC-Chapel Hill, through its diverse student organizations, makes students feel like members of a community, provides opportunities for students to feel like they are not alone, and helps them find people who will support them. The friends that I met through student organizations helped me overcome my academic struggles and helped me feel at home at UNC-Chapel Hill. Having other students from diverse backgrounds at UNC-Chapel Hill was important in helping me feel comfortable and supported.

10. In my African and Afro-American Studies ("AFAM") class, my professor was White, and only five Black students were enrolled in the class. I found that class so rewarding. Granted, it was great to hear perspectives of people who look like me, talk like me, and act like me, but it was also great to hear the perspectives of potential allies with different backgrounds, who can empathize and share their thoughts. Our class had a robust exchange of ideas, where students had a true desire to learn about African-

American history. This was different than being in a class with people who pick courses because they are easy, or fun, or engaging; people took the AFAM class out of a true desire to learn about people who are different than they are, and because they truly wanted to understand different backgrounds. There are not many places where you feel like you have the opportunity to share personal perspectives with those from different backgrounds, so this experience really stood out.

11. Martin Luther King, Jr. calls the feeling I felt at UNC-Chapel Hill the beloved community—where despite what you look like or where you come from, people respect you for who you are and for your character. I felt that intentional beloved community in all of my classes at UNC-Chapel Hill. If anyone wanted to be malicious or judgmental, they were not welcome. It was a magical feeling. If I could put it in a bottle and sell it, I would be a millionaire.

12. I cannot think of a time at UNC-Chapel Hill when I felt pressure, as the only Black person in a class or group, to speak for my race. There was a network of Black students, and I felt connected to that network. If there was a time when I felt like a representative of my race, there was an intentionality to it, such as through BSM or my fraternity. Greek Affairs held leadership meetings where leaders from different councils would gather to give reports about their successes and struggles, and I represented my fraternity. As a representative of a historically Black fraternity, I spoke about my experiences on campus and suggested ideas that would make members of historically Black fraternities feel more a part of campus.

13. While these were my experiences, I know other minority students who struggled more at UNC-Chapel Hill. If UNC-Chapel Hill's enrollment of minorities were to drop, I would be very concerned about minority students being able to find community on campus.

### **Life after UNC-Chapel Hill**

14. Before coming to UNC-Chapel Hill, I was an angry child, and my anger stemmed from the fact that I moved schools so many times. I realized that my educational experience had improved, but I never considered why until I arrived at UNC-Chapel Hill. When we moved to nicer neighborhoods, the schools were better, the teachers were nicer, and the students were more engaging. At UNC-Chapel Hill, I learned about the achievement gap, and the fact that a zip code change can correlate with a better academic experience. The fact that UNC-Chapel Hill helped me name the achievement gap inspired me to pursue a career in social justice.

15. While at UNC-Chapel Hill, I was recruited by Teach for America but realized it was not a good fit for me. Then, a UNC-Chapel Hill classmate connected me to City Year. City Year has an educational nonprofit gap year program where participants dedicate one year to serve as tutors, mentors, and role models in underserved areas. I started by doing the gap year program, and it was a great fit. I have now worked for City Year for approximately eight years.

16. My experience at UNC-Chapel Hill was a huge reason for my career, and I now encourage kids to go to UNC-Chapel Hill. Graduates of UNC-Chapel Hill know the

importance of service and appreciate justice. UNC-Chapel Hill is one of the top schools where City Year recruits.

17. Having the ability to interact with people of different backgrounds is critical when working not only at City Year but everywhere else as well. It is a hindrance if you do not have experience with diversity. If you do not have experience interacting with diverse people before starting at City Year, you have to learn in order to participate. Power comes from bringing different voices to the table, and you learn and grow from those voices. Coming from UNC-Chapel Hill, graduates, including myself, have a leg up. UNC-Chapel Hill graduates do not have to get used to working with different types of people—we have done that for four years.

18. It is important for high school students to see students of color who graduate from college. When I speak with high school students, they see me as someone who looks like them, speaks like them, and acts like them. They think, “if he can do it, I can do it.” It happens without me even explicitly saying the words. Once I build relationships with these students, I tell them that I believe in them and they can do it. I am not a special case. I am just a typical UNC-Chapel Hill alum.

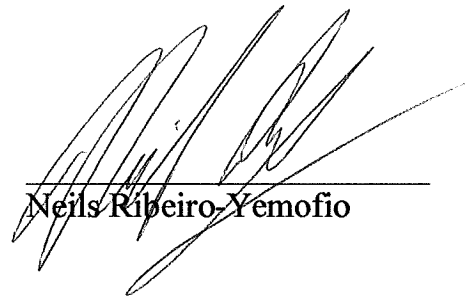
### **Conclusion**

19. I was able to overcome challenges to find a strong sense of community at UNC-Chapel Hill. UNC-Chapel Hill prepared me well for a career in service, and I am honored to use my education to help other minority students succeed in school and achieve their dreams. UNC-Chapel Hill’s diversity matters to its students and should be embraced.



I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: 7/5/17



Neils Ribeiro Yemofio